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**INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON**

03/23/2017

**DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

TO: White House Cabinet Affairs Communications

FROM: Heather Swift & Megan Bloomgren

SUBJECT: Communications Update

**Inquiries**

- The Hill, BBC, Guardian, Huffington Post, Fox News, EE News – REQUEST – More details about Doggy Days at Interior – RESPONSE – Forwarded the email from Sec. Zinke and provided photos.
- BuzzFeed – REQUEST - Did the issue of transfer of the National Bison Range to trust status for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes come up during Secretary Zinke's visit to the range earlier this month? Did he make public comments about it during the visit, or meet any stakeholders? Didn't see any mention on this release but thought to check. – RESPONSE – It was an internal staff meeting to discuss wildlife, habitat and infrastructure. Transfer was not on the agenda.

**Top Stories**

- EE News: [How unwise retweets became a White House 'emergency'](#)
- Washington Post: [In a first for the government, dogs will be welcome at the Interior ...](#)
  - Also picked up by Fox News; Dana closed the 2PM hour with it
- Oil and Gas 360: [\\$275 Million Spent in GOM Lease Sale, a Far Cry from When Oil ...](#)
- HuffPo: [Interior Department Is All About Letting The Dogs Out — At Work](#)

**Top Issues and Accomplishments**

- Preparing to support Energy/Climate EOs
- FYIs – The Department will issue press releases this week on the following American Energy activity
  - March 20-23 - DOI will release a number of small coal lease sales in Utah, Ohio, ND.
  - Offshore oil/gas sale
  - Offshore wind energy
- Launched a “*Travels with Z*” blog on our website that is Secretary Zinke’s travel blog going to America’s public lands and his work on the front lines improving land management for multiple use (energy, recreation, conservation, economy)

## MORNING UPDATE

### This Week

- Signing BLM 2.0
- Executive Order on American Energy
- Secretarial Orders
- Virgin Islands Centennial

## CLIPS

### Executive Order

**WATCH:** [On Sunday EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt was on ABC's "This Week with George Stephanopolous" discussing the President's Executive Order on energy.](#)

#### **Executive Order Will Begin Eliminating Obama Carbon Emissions Rules.**

[Bloomberg News](#) (3/26, Dlouhy) reports EPA Administrator Pruitt told ABC's "This Week" on Sunday that the Administration will issue an executive order on Tuesday that begins the process of ending an Obama Administration rule that reduced carbon dioxide emissions and discouraged coal-fired electricity. President Trump's "long-awaited executive order also is slated to compel Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to lift a moratorium on the sale of new coal leases on federal land."

The [Washington Times](#) (3/26, Wolfgang) says the executive order "is just the first step in what will be a complex process" as the EPA "still must hold public hearings, accept public comments, consult with stakeholders, and likely face numerous lawsuits in its effort to eliminate the Clean Power Plan altogether." The Times adds that "specialists have said it will take at least one year, possibly longer, to remove it from the books."

#### **Ohio Coal Miners Put Faith In Trump.**

The [Columbus \(OH\) Dispatch](#) (3/26, Gearino) reports that "communities such as Freeport...have put their faith in President Donald Trump's vow to bring back coal country." The Dispatch says "Trump has promised to roll back costly environmental regulations, but it's unclear whether policy changes can save the coal industry from profound shifts in the energy market." According to the Energy Information Administration, "the mining workforce is down largely because of cuts in orders from electricity generators, which have shut down more than 100 coal-fired power plants nationwide since 2010." Chuck McConnell, executive director of an energy and environment initiative at Rice University in Houston, "sees one main culprit in coal's decline: inexpensive natural gas from U.S. shale formations" while other factors, "including federal environmental rules, play a role...but a much smaller one."

#### **Gallup Poll: Most Americans Oppose Drilling On Federal Lands.**

[NBC News](#) (3/24) reported that on the same day President Trump approved the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, a poll released by Gallup showed that 53 percent of Americans oppose opening federal lands for oil exploration, compared to 34 percent opposed to the idea five

years ago. Gallup says that the decline is more likely because of cheaper gasoline prices than environmental sensitivity. The poll report says, “At that time, a gallon of gasoline averaged \$3.91, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration...the most recent estimates, from February 2017, show gas averaging \$2.42 a gallon.” Jenn Lenard, spokesman for the National Association of Convenience Stores, said, “Generally we see that when prices are low, there’s much less concern related to supply and demand.”

## **Virgin Islands**

### **New Project Leader Takes Over At St. Croix Wetlands Management District.**

The [New Richmond \(WI\) News](#) (3/25, Lindfors) reports that Bridget Olson is the new project leader of the US Fish and Wildlife Service St. Croix Wetlands Management District. She “steps into a position grown under the guidance of her predecessor, Tom Kerr, who left to take on the responsibilities of a regional refuge supervisor last fall.” According to the article, “after getting reconnected, Olson plans to meet individually with the members of her staff to learn about what they are working on, what their priorities are and how she can help put them in positions to succeed.”

## **Utah Watch**

### **Utah’s Congressional Delegation Wants Trump To Rescind Bears Ears National Monument.**

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (3/25, Carlton) reports that Utah’s Republican lawmakers and congressional delegates are trying to shut down the recently designated Bears Ears National Monument, which was approved by President Obama in the last days of his presidency. The monument currently has no visitor’s center or highway entrance, but the Journal says it is beginning to attract visitors. Utah’s congressional delegation has asked President Trump to rescind the monument, with House Oversight Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz saying, “It was such a gross overuse and abuse of executive power.”

Trump, however, could face problems in being able to undo Obama’s actions in forming the new national monument, the [Wall Street Journal](#) (3/25, Carlton) warns. The Journal says that under the Antiquities Act of 1906, no president has ever overturned the creation of a monument, according to congressional researchers. Chaffetz has argued that if the monument cannot be rescinded, then Congress should take steps to reign in the power of the President to make such unilateral decisions.